

## Diversification of Crops on the Florida Farm.

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Florida.

All students of economic conditions in Florida must realize the fact that the future prosperity and wealth of the state must come from its agriculture. The sawmill and turpentine still, which were really the pioneers of progressive agriculture, will in a few more years be things of the past, and in the years to come will simply have been incidents in the life history of the state. And considering the fact that there are no mineral resources in the state to fall back upon, except a few phosphate beds, which are confined to a small area, we can easily see the correctness of our opening proposition. The truck and fruit industry of the state must always hold a very prominent position towards its upbuilding, prosperity and wealth. But it is the general farmer, the man who grows the crops in general use, and keeps plenty of live stock on his farm, who will in the coming years bring our fair state to that degree of prosperity second to none in the union.

The truck and citrus business of the state is to a large extent of an uncertain character, owing to the liability of being injured by severe winter freezes and late spring frosts. As witnessed by the freeze of 1894-5 and 1899 when some citrus groves of the state were almost wiped out of existence, and every spring the truck growers meet with more or less losses from late frosts. This, coupled with uncertain returns and transportation difficulties, make the trucking industry very much of a lottery proposition.

True, there are a great number of men in the state making money by growing truck for northern markets, but there are far more that are not breaking even one year with another. We always hear of the men that are successful, but we seldom ever hear of the scores of men that are not. From personal observation of several seasons of the tons upon tons of vegetables left in the fields to rot where they grew when prices would not warrant the gathering and shipping of them. We are all the more convinced that general farming conducted along the lines of diversification of crops will in the long run prove more successful as an all-round agricultural industry of the state, and with the long seasons, genial climate, and soils responsive to proper treatment, the diversification of crops is bound to bring its own reward.

The history of our agricultural

methods as generally practiced prove conclusively that our farmers have in most cases been carrying the heavy burden of poor farmers, and to get away from under this burden, business methods must be brought into practice. Farmers must come to look at the soil of their farms in the same way as the business man looks at his capital stock, the means to end in wealth and production. He must use business methods by diversifying his crops and growing them in the rotation that is going to maintain and increase the fertility of his soil. To this end he should classify his crops somewhat in the following order: cash crops, farm crops, forage crops, soil-building crops, cover crops, pastures, and live stock in proportion to the farm's ability to produce feeds for their profitable production.

### "Cash Crops."

Every farmer should grow some crop or crops that can be turned into ready cash so as to have money available for "general expenses," to pay for labor, fertilizer, and any incidentals.

This crop should be along the line of what is most suitable for his soil, his location, and the general trend of his crop production. In the fruit and trucking sections strawberries, cabbage, lettuce, beans, cucumbers, Irish potatoes, cantaloupes, and watermelons, can be grown for this purpose. All, however, depending on the help available, transportation facilities, and the ability of the local markets to use most or all of them. With a long season at command in this state, some of the above should be in evidence almost every month of the year by making periodic sowings as the seasons come on suitable to their production. On some farms quite a revenue is derived from poultry products and when attention is paid to this branch of agricultural work, the income tax can be derived from it is something to be counted upon. The same remark holds true regarding dairy products for which there is an unlimited demand all the year round for high-grade products.

### Farm Crops.

Among the list of farm crops proper, the corn crop should get the most prominence, as it is a crop that is suitable for all sections of the state, provided the variety best adapted to the section in view is grown, due care being necessary to get the best seed for this purpose.

Sweet potatoes are also in excellent farm crop and can be grown to good advantage in all parts of the state and if proper methods are used for their production, and the careful banking of the crop when harvested, it will prove as profitable as most farm

crops, and there is never enough of sweet potatoes grown to supply even the home demand all the year round.

Two crops of Irish potatoes can be grown in all parts of the state, a spring and a fall crop, and by careful harvesting and proper methods of housing, the one crop can be made to run into the other, thus giving us a continuous table supply for the whole year.

Sorghum is another good farm crop. It can be used as forage to great advantage, both in the dry state and in the green state for hog and cattle feed. If the crop is planted early, two and in some cases three cuttings can be had in one season. Sorghum mixed with corn makes the best silage material that the farmer can use.

Sugar cane is one of the best money-makers of the whole list of farm crops. It is an easily grown crop and is suitable to all sections of the state, and when manufactured into a high-grade syrup the returns in hard cash per acre are very satisfactory. Yields of four and five hundred gallons per acre being about the average and the retail price seldom goes below 50 cents per gallon for a good article.

Oats are an excellent crop and serve a double purpose of being a farm crop and a winter cover crop, and if the rust-proof variety is used, a very satisfactory yield of grain can be expected.

Barley is another good farm crop for winter cover crop and for winter pasturage, and where clay prevails in the soil it will if planted in late October give better results than oats. Rye is a general favorite for cover crop purposes, but as a grain producer, the results are not equal to oats or barley.

### Forage Crops.

The variety of our forage crops and the quantities than can be produced per acre in this state exceeds any other section of the country that we know of, and when live stock are kept on the farm and the forage crops fed to them and the resulting manure put back on the land, we are adopting the highest type of agriculture which will result in a more permanent improvement of the soil than can be brought about by any other method. Among the most worthy of consideration in this connection are the hay from crabgrass, natal grass, Mexican clover, millet, beggarweed, cowpeas, velvet beans, soy beans, and corn stover got by cutting and shucking the corn crop at the right time. In this list can also be included peanuts, chufas, Japanese sugar cane. The last being really one of the best in the list, as it is adapted to all kinds of soil and the yield per acre exceeds any other. As a hog and cattle feed, it can-

not be excelled. It is ready for use early in October and by windrowing it carefully when cold weather comes, covering with leaves and trash to protect it, it can be used continuously from October to May.

### Soil Building Crops.

First in rank as a soil builder is the velvet bean, because of its exceptional yield per acre and its ability to collect the free nitrogen of the air on its roots in the form of nodules. It is estimated that a crop of velvet beans after the beans are picked and the crop grazed by live stock and plowed under in the fall is worth at least \$10 per acre for the nitrogen and humus it stores in the soil. This crop should always follow a crop that depletes the soil, such as corn, cane, sweet potatoes, etc.

Cowpeas are another soil builder, not only from their ability to collect nitrogen on the roots, but from their deep rooting habit, giving the soil an improved mechanical condition as well as their fertilizing results. But where cowpeas are grown in the grove or orchard, root-knot resistant varieties should be used. The iron and brabham are the two best known for this purpose.

Beggarweed is also good for soil building purposes and being a self-seeder, after it once gets a start is to be recommended in this class.

Soy beans and peanuts are also nitrogen gatherers and when hogs are a part of the farm products these crops serve a double purpose.

Mexican clover is also classed among the soil-builders and while it is not a legume, its roots run very deep and open up the subsoil, and if the crop is plowed under in the fall and used for humus production, the results will be very satisfactory.

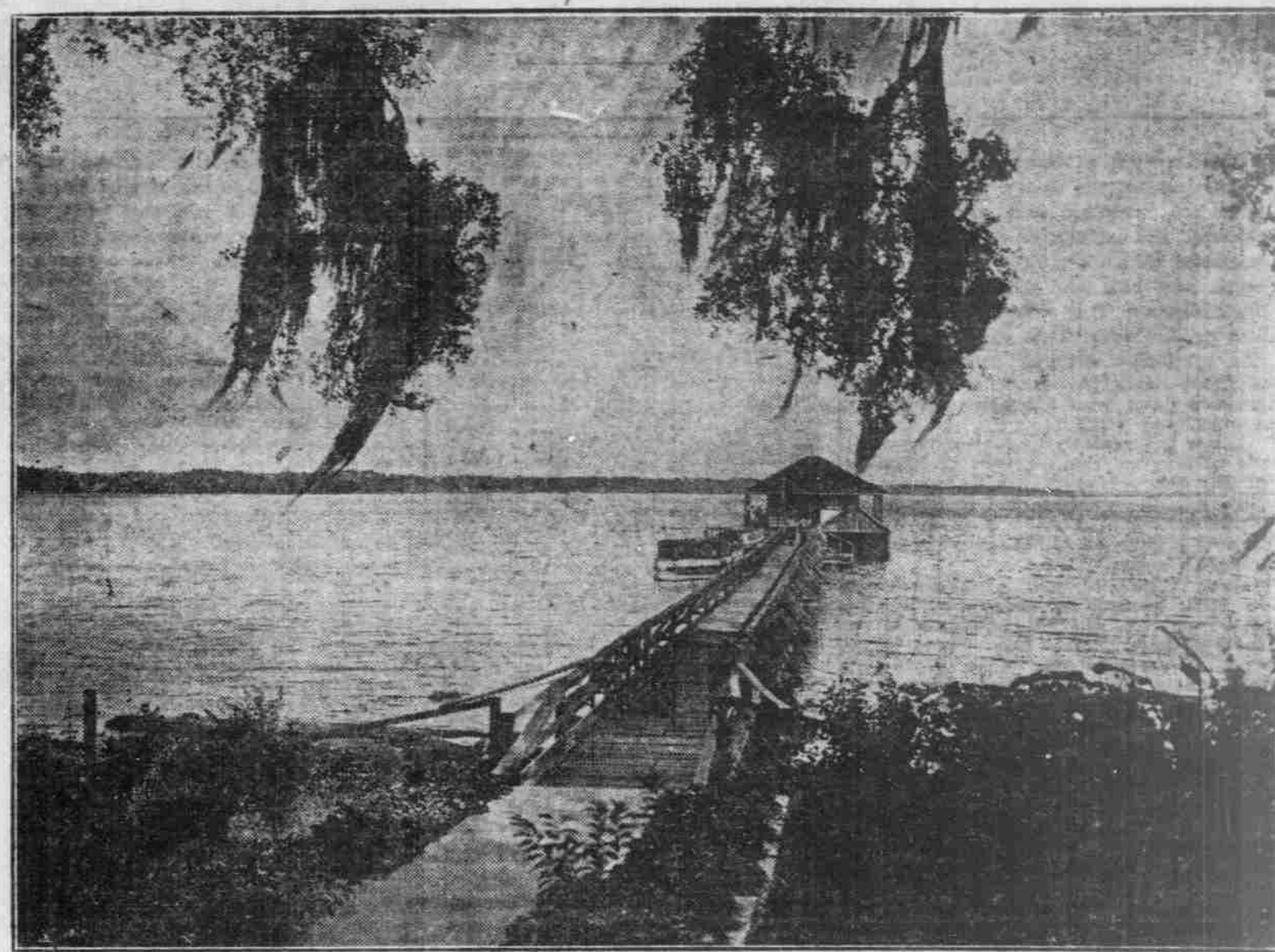
### Cover Crops.

In general practice the Florida farmer does not pay much attention to cover crops, which means crops grown for soil cover purposes in the winter and fed in the green state or plowed under early in the spring. This is a good method along the lines of soil building and is going to become more general as we come to understand improved farming methods. The best crops for this purpose are rye, crimson clover and hairy vetch. The last two being legumes are especially to be recommended. Buckwheat sown in October can be used for this purpose in December when an early spring crop is wanted on the same land. Rape if sown thick in October can be used in January and February for soiling purposes or grazed off by hogs or live stock to flood advantage before plowing under in the early spring. Our open, sandy lands can be brought very readily into a high state of crop production if we practice the growing of these crops in winter, but along this line let us suggest a caution of plowing them under before the first of March. If delayed later and warm weather prevails, the plowing under of a heavy crop of green material may produce humic acid in the soil, which is detrimental to bacterial life and in that case plowing under a cover crop may do more harm than good.

### Live Stock.

A farm without live stock is not

## PICTURESQUE SANTA ROSA SCENE



Bathhouse, owned by Hon. Peter Tomassello, on Blackwater Basin, Santa Rosa county, Florida. Shore shaded by Live Oak Trees and Long Spanish Moss.

a complete farm and the man that tries to run a farm without them is not a well rounded out farmer. A man that devotes all his farm to the production of grain or cotton or any special crop, is very little better than a farm laborer. Hogs as an adjunct to all farming operations are a prime necessity on every farm. They are money-makers in every sense of the term and can be profitably employed to use and convert succulent and waste materials on the farm, in the orchard, and orange groves, to a finished product in the shape of pork. The improved breeds are to be especially recommended as they give better returns for the feed consumed than any of the razor-back type, and can be marketed at a very much earlier age. The beef type of cattle should be kept in sufficient number to use up the forages and hay products of the farm. But the dairy cow is the type c' animal that is really the money-getter. An old saying is that "Prosperity follows the milk pail," and it is

as true of Florida as any part of Uncle Sam's wide domain, and considering the fact that millions of dollars are sent out of the state yearly for dairy products, the future of the dairy industry in this state is very bright, as dairy feeds can be grown in great abundance and variety on every farm. The dairying side of farming can be conducted as profitably in Florida as in any of the what is known as dairy states.

### Pastures.

On all well arranged farms there should be a few acres of pastures. In our state Bermuda grass has been found the most satisfactory so far. Bermuda, however, is somewhat affected with winter frost and turns somewhat brown in color, but at the same time stock relish it. A good plan to get an all-year-round pasture is to disk Bermuda sod in September and sow Burr clover on it, sowing the seed in the burr. This refers specially to the heavier soils. The Burr clover will provide a winter pasture and being self-seeding, the perpetuation of

the crop is assured when once started. In the flat woods section of the state and on bottom lands "Paspalum grass" will afford a good pasture. This grass is well disseminated all over the state and is known to the natives under the name "carpet" or "goose grass." When this grass once gets a start under congenial conditions, it proves very satisfactory, particularly so on the cut-over pine lands of the state, and as the agricultural industry of the state progresses, we shall find out the grasses best adapted to the different sections and adopt them as their utility becomes apparent. In the past the pasture proposition has been entirely overlooked and neglected and the live stock side of agriculture has been on a side-track, but in the future when our farmers realize the great benefit to be had from live stock production, this pasture proposition will get as much attention as the other branches of agriculture, because the problem of good pastures all the year round in Florida is not by any means an insolvable one.

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